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Penalty Urged for Disclosure of Spies' Identities

CIA Director Says Bill Is Needed to Provide Jail Terms Up to 10 Years

WASHINGTON (AP)—CIA Director William J. Casey said Friday that a bill to jail anyone who publicly identifies a U.S. spy is needed to prevent serious harm to American intelligence agencies.

"I can confirm that the unauthorized disclosures have resulted in untold damage and, if not stopped, will result in further damage to the effectiveness of our intelligence apparatus and hence to the nation itself," Casey said.

He testified before a Senate Judiciary subcommittee that is considering a bill, sponsored by Sen. John H. Chafee (R-R.I.), to impose jail terms of up to 10 years for anyone with access to classified information who discloses the name of an agent.

Bill Failed Last Year

Similar legislation failed to reach a Senate floor vote last year as opponents contended that it was unconstitutional and could stifle legitimate news reporting of intelligence activities.

Casey and other supporters of the bill insisted that it was constitutional and would not interfere with the

rights of the press or others in legitimate pursuit of information.

Sen. Jeremiah Denton (R-Ala.), the Subcommittee chairman, said, "The disclosure of the identity of a covert agent is an immoral act which cannot be tolerated."

Denton, a prisoner of war in North Vietnam for more than 7½ years, said the absence of criminal penalties for disclosure of spies' names was cause for glee among enemies of the United States.

Communists 'Pleased'

"From my personal contact with high-ranking Communists, they are amazed, amused and highly pleased" that agents' identities can be revealed with impunity, Denton said.

The bill is aimed in part at a publication called Covert Action Information Bulletin, which has repeatedly published the names of alleged American agents.

U.S. officials have blamed the publication for causing the death of CIA agent Richard Welch in Athens in 1975.

"A substantial number of these disclosures have been accurate,"

Casey said. "I am hopeful that we will soon see enactment of a measure which will finally put an end to the pernicious and damaging unauthorized disclosures of intelligence identities."

The American Civil Liberties Union and Americans for Democratic Action testified against the Chafee proposal.

ADA Director Leon Shull said, "It should not be necessary to muzzle the press and forbid the publication of unclassified information to meet foreign policy objectives."